

Richmond Hill cafe & larder

CHEESE NOTES

Vieux Porche Camembert

Normandy, France

It is said that when Napoleon first encountered this style of cheese, he kissed the waitress who served it to him. Such is the power of Camembert. One of the world's most emulated cheeses. Most of the Camembert made in Normandy, follows the strict rules laid down under AOC status granted in 1983. For example the curds are hand-ladled into hoops five times over 45 minutes to ensure correct moisture and texture. The cheese is then dry salted before maturation, which takes place over 21 days in a series of temperature and humidity controlled rooms. These are responsible for encouraging the unique flora that grows on the surface of the cheese. Packing and selection of all cheese is also undertaken by hand, and only by women with sensitive hands (no men allowed). Finally there is that little wooden box the cheese is packaged in, so important in providing a microclimate for ripening and transporting the cheese.

Just when a camembert is ready to eat is open to much debate. Locals like it young with a thin, chalky heart. But most of us have learnt to prefer it when the interior has softened to a moist sticky texture and the outer rind is a mix of white mould lightly flecked with patches of orange. Don't be surprised by the unmistakable smell! Described as "les Pieds de Dieu" or "the Feet of God", a mature Camembert has aromas similar to wet hay, and cooked cauliflower. The curd of real camembert ripens to become soft and unctuous – a cut cheese will bulge forth over time but will never run like fully ripened Brie. The white, fluffy rind becomes mottled with orange and may develop a slight ammonia smell when ripe, contributing to the pungent, vegetal characteristic flavour which makes this one of our most requested cheeses. It also helps that it comes in one of the cutest boxes!